

# Policy Statement Guiding Development of the Commonwealth Virtual University (July 13, 1998)

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## Background

The Commonwealth Virtual University (CVU) created with passage of the Kentucky Postsecondary Education Improvement Act of 1997, will play a critical role in achieving the goals for 2020 outlined in that legislation - in particular, the need to create a postsecondary education system that is accessible, efficient, and responsive to the needs of Kentucky's citizens and economic stakeholders.

To initiate the planning and development of the CVU, the Distance Learning Advisory Committee (DLAC) of the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) sought input from Kentucky's postsecondary leadership as well as national leaders in the field. This policy statement reflects that input and represents the general consensus reached by the DLAC and the CPE relative to broad policy guidelines for developing the CVU. These guidelines will provide direction to the next stage in the planning and development effort.

## CVU Mission and Purpose

The mission of the CVU is to be a student-centered, technology-based system for coordinating the delivery of postsecondary education that meets the needs of citizens and employers across the Commonwealth. Through enabling policies and appropriate technologies, the CVU shall consist initially of three primary components: 1) a *clearinghouse* for quality distance learning opportunities provided by existing institutions within and outside the state, primarily certificate and degree programs; 2) *competency-based credentialing*; and 3) a single point of access to *statewide student library, and academic support services*.

Consistent with the statewide strategic agenda for postsecondary education, the primary purposes of the CVU are to:

- Enhance and expand educational access and increase educational attainment across Kentucky.
- Upgrade workforce skills and expand professional development through basic and continuing education.
- Increase collaboration and foster efficiency and effectiveness in delivering courses and programs.
- Enhance educational quality.
- Increase global competitiveness of Kentucky's educational resources.

## Targeted Clients

Given the CVU's charge to increase access to and attainment of postsecondary education experiences, the CVU will target the following primary clients, recognizing, at the same time, that the nature of electronic delivery systems is such that potential users/clients are essentially unlimited:

- Adult students
- Place-bound and time-bound students
- Employers and employees in business, industry, and government
- P-12 students, teachers, and administrators
- Traditional residential students
- Students living in other states and countries

## Role of the CPE

*The Council on Postsecondary Education is responsible for establishing CVU policy and ensuring CVU development in partnership with Kentucky's postsecondary education institutions and consistent with HB1.* The Initial responsibility of the CPE in the development of the CVU is to identify and adopt an effective, efficient organizational structure and operating unit for administering the CVU. The CVU shall not be a freestanding, separately accredited degree-granting institution *but will function with standing and ad hoc advisory committees, including an academic council, that are primarily made up of representatives of the postsecondary education institutions.*

The CPE will work closely with both public and independent institutions through the DLAC in fulfilling the following CVU-related responsibilities:

- Adopt an organizational structure for managing CVU daily operations.
- Develop new enabling policies and review existing CPE legal responsibilities and policies, including those related to tuition, fees, financial aid, extended-campus (e.g., geographic service areas), academic program development and review, transferability of credit, accountability, and others, in light of the CVU mandate, and revise as appropriate.
- Conduct needs assessments for courses, degree programs, and services.
- Develop a statewide plan for providing and marketing distance-learning access to postsecondary education.
- Identify appropriate providers to meet identified needs.
- *Emphasize efficiency in the delivery of coherent programs of study normally leading to certificates of degrees, and in providing administrative and academic support services to students and faculty.*
- Develop and maintain a clearinghouse system that, among other things, will provide a focal point for student and educator access to a wide variety of services, a statewide catalogue of information for students, and a statewide schedule of CVU courses and program offerings.
- Establish principles of good practice and quality standards for educational offerings.
- Facilitate statewide faculty development initiatives.
- *Establish outcomes measures and accountability processes to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of CVU offerings.*
- Identify pilot initiatives.
- Provide funding incentives that further the mission and purposes of the CVU.

## Role of Postsecondary Institutions

The goals of the Commonwealth Virtual University shall first be attained through the cooperative efforts of Kentucky's existing postsecondary institutions. Pursuant to the Kentucky Postsecondary Education Improvement Act of 1997, "the regional universities shall be the primary developers and deliverers of baccalaureate and master's degree programs to be delivered by the Commonwealth Virtual university; however, this does not preclude the University of Kentucky, the University of Louisville, of independent colleges from offering baccalaureate and master's degree programs or other course offerings, and community colleges and the technical institutions offering associate and technical degree programs or other courses through the Commonwealth Virtual University."

Responsibilities of the institutions include:

- Participating with CVU in identifying the postsecondary education needs of the citizens and employers in the Commonwealth.
- Identifying and developing distance learning courses, programs, and other credentialing mechanisms, that are responsive to the identified needs and that are consistent with institutional missions and the statewide Strategic Agenda.
- Reducing inefficiencies and improving quality in course and program offerings through inter-institutional cooperation, the use of distance learning technologies, and the application of contemporary instructional technologies.
- Identifying or developing high quality distance learning courses and programs that are competitive in the national and international market.

- Providing coordinated student, library, and academic support services for the CVU that meet the unique needs of CVU students.
- Participating in the CVU consistent with the CPE adopted policies and the statutory responsibilities of each institution.

### Guiding Principles

Decision-making processes for all entities and organizations charged with planning, coordinating, operating, and regulating the CVU, including the CPE, the CPE-authorized CVU coordinating entity, the DLAC, DLAC Work Groups, and education providers, shall be guided by this policy statement in its entirety, including the following guiding principles.

The CVU shall:

- Implement the vision, goals, and objectives of the statewide strategic agenda for postsecondary education.
- Recognize institutional missions and their respective strategic plans.
- Effectively and efficiently utilize existing resources, including faculty, services, and information technology, to accomplish its goals.
- Capitalize on and create synergies among the educational resources and services of in-state institutions, both public and independent.
- Use regional, national, and international resources to meet the needs of students that cannot be met by in-state institutions.
- Use available state resources, including public schools, in the delivery of postsecondary education.
- Develop importing and outsourcing options where appropriate.
- Use educational best practices across the country and globe to conceptualize, develop, deliver, and evaluate instruction, student services where and when needed.
- Seek maximum transferability of credits among all institutions and programs, consistent with appropriate accreditation standards.
- Recognize the primary role of faculty in curriculum development.
- Promote faculty and staff reward and recognition systems that value innovative uses of alternative delivery systems.
- Recognize, evaluate and, where appropriate and feasible, adopt state-of-the-art technologies and processes that can best serve Kentucky's needs.
- Integrate, to the maximum extent possible, assessment of the CVU with the CPE's existing accountability and comprehensive data base systems.
- Address intellectual property and copyright issues.

Produce high quality student learning.